

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /011 W
-----045084 021526Z /53

O R 020620Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7360
INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MASERU 1126

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, BC
SUBJECT: BOTSWANA MILITARY ASSISTANCE

REF: A. STATE 157928, B. STATE 178413,

1. SUMMARY. FOLLOWING ARE REPLIES TO QUESTIONS REQUESTED REF A FOR USE IN REVIEWING BOTSWANA'S REQUEST FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE. THEY ARE SUBMITTED, FOLLOWING DISCUSSIONS IN GABORONE, AS CONSIDERED ESTIMATES OF LATEST PROBABILITIES. OUR HOPE IS THAT THEY WILL FACILITATE DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION TO MAKE POSSIBLE FMS CASH OR CREDIT SALES TO BOTSWANA. END SUMMARY.

2. A. QUESTION: IF WE PROVIDE CREDITS FOR 10-15 PERCENT OF TOTAL REQUIREMENTS, WHERE WOULD BOTSWANA GO FOR REMAINDER?

ANSWER: IF THE BASIC SHIPMENT CAME FROM THE U.S. (AND DEPENDING ON PROSPECTS FOR OBTAINING THE REST OF ITS NEEDS FROM US), GOB WOULD PROBABLY PREFER TO PROCURE REMAINDER FROM THE U.K. IN AN EFFORT TO MAXIMIZE STANDARDIZATION OF EQUIPMENT, TRAINING, ETC. FOR BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE (BDF). BUT ONE CANNOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT MORE ATTRACTIVE TERMS (I.E. GRANTS VERSUS CREDITS) CONFIDENTIAL

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FROM COMMUNIST SOURCES, PLUS PRESSURES FROM SOME ELEMENTS GOB, DOMESTIC POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND FROM OTHER FRONT LINE STATES IN FAVOR OF MORE "NON-ALIGNED" POSTURE MIGHT INDUCE GOB TO TURN TO CHINA OR USSR FOR AT LEAST PART OF THE REMAINDER.

B. QUESTION: IS THE UK OR CHINA THE MOST LIKELY SOURCE?

ANSWER: WITH THE EXPECTED ARRIVAL OF UK MILITARY ASSISTANCE TEAM (REF A) AS WELL AS FAVORABLE AUGURY OF RECENT CASH PURCHASES OF AIRCRAFT FROM UK, WE BELIEVE GOB'S PROPENSITY TO SEEK UK SOURCES FOR MILITARY GOODS, ALTHOUGH MARGINAL, HAS BEEN ENHANCED. NONETHELESS, FOR REASONS CITED ABOVE, THE GOB COULD STILL BE INDUCED TO ACCEPT AT LEAST PART OF ITS REQUIREMENTS FROM PRC OR SOVIETS. RECENTLY REPEATED ARMS OFFERS BY SOVIETS, GOB/BDF DISSATISFACTION WITH POOR QUALITY PRC ARMS AND UNDOUBTED SENTIMENT IN SOME GOB QUARTERS TO PREFER SOVIET OVER CHINESE WEAPONS FOR REASONS OF COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER STATES IN LIBERATION STRUGGLE, ALL HAVE CREATED ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH WE SEEN EVENTUAL GOB ACCEPTANCE OF SOVIET (OR CUBAN SURROGATE) WEAPONS AT LEAST AS LIKELY AS PROCUREMENT OF CHINESE ARMS.

C. QUESTION: WHAT TERMS WOULD OTHER DONORS MOST LIKELY OFFER: CASH, CREDITS OR GRANTS?

ANSWER: THE UK: STRICTLY CASH SALES; THE CHINESE OR SOVIETS: GRANTS.

D. QUESTION: WHAT WILL BE THE POLITICAL EFFECT ON BOTSWANA, DOMESTICALLY AND IN RELATION TO ITS NEIGHBORS, IF CHINA PROVIDES ARMS?

ANSWER: ARMS FROM CHINA WOULD BE REGARDED AS CONCESSION TO NON-ALIGNED OPINION AND EXPLAINABLE AS SUCH BOTH DEOMESTICALLY AND TO CONFIDENTIAL

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GOB'S NEIGHBORS. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, THERE IS PRECEDENT FOR GOB ACQUISITION OF ARMS FROM PRC, I.E. EARLY THIS YEAR WITH THE ACTIVE COLLABORATION OF TANZANIA AND ZAMBIA. PRC SUPPLIER ROLE COULD BE PRESENTED AS FOLLOW-UP TO THAT SHIPMENT WHICH CAUSED FEW RIPPLES DOMESTICALLY OR IN THE AREA (WE ASSUME THAT THE FACT OF SHIPMENT HAS BECOME KNOWN DESPITE CAREFUL GOB EFFORTS TO MINIMIZE PUBLICITY). PRC ARMS SUPPLIER ROLE WOULD THEREFORE BE REGARDED, ON BALANCE, AS ALIGNING BOTSWANA MORE CLOSELY TO FRONT LINE STATES AND LIBERATION MOVEMENTS WHICH TAKE ARMS FROM COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, INCLUDING PRESUMABLY PRC. DOMESTICALLY SUCH A MOVE WOULD TEND TO DECREASE EXTERNAL PRESSURE ON BOTSWANA FROM OTHER BLOC AFRICAN STATES IN THE AREA. IT WOULD NO DOUBT BE A SOURCE OF CONCERN TO SAG AND ADD A STRAIN ON CLOSE, BUT STILL FRAGILE, RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SAG AND GOB. INTERNALLY IT WOULD HELP GOB BLUNT CRITICISM ON SECURITY GROUNDS FROM OPPOSITION PARTIES, NOTABLY BOTSWANA NATIONAL FRONT (BNF) AND WOULD, AS NOTED ABOVE, SATISFY CERTAIN GOB OFFICIALS WHO FAVOR COMMUNIST PROCUREMENT AS A BALANCING MECHANISM. AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, IT WOULD COMPLICATE IDENTIFICATION OF ARMS SINCE BDF MIGHT BE ARMED WITH SAME TYPES OF WEAPONS CARRIED BY FREEDOM FIGHTERS. IT WOULD ALSO NO DOUBT BE CONSTRUED BY RHODESIA AND SAG AS CONFIRMATION OF THEIR THEORY OF GROWING COMMUNIST INFLUENCE (EVEN CONSPIRACY) IN

THIS AREA. AS SUCH IT WOULD HEIGHTEN THEIR SECURITY CONCERNS AND MIGHT REMOVE SOME OF THEIR INHIBITIONS ABOUT ORDERING INCURSIONS (BY RHODESIAN FORCES) INTO BOTSWANA. THESE ARGUMENTS AND LINE OF REASONING WOULD BE WHOLLY UNDERCUT IF U.S. (OR UK) WERE THE SOURCE OF ARMS. MORE POSITIVELY, THE POLITICAL SIGNAL TO SAG AND RHODESIA WOULD BE TOTALLY DIFFERENT. IF U.S. WERE SOURCE OF ARMS OUR ACTION COULD BE PRESENTED AS TOKEN OF OUR SERIOUS COMMITMENT TO CARRY OUT U.S. POLICY DECLARATIONS IN AFRICA. FOR EXAMPLE, IN HIS JULY 1 SPEECH, SECRETARY VANCE SAID "WE WILL CONSIDER SYMPATHETICALLY APPEALS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM STATES WHICH ARE THREATENED BY A BUILD-UP OF FOREIGN MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND ADVISORS ON THEIR BORDERS". HE ALSO STATED THAT "WHEN THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF A FRIENDLY STATE IS THREATENED, WE WILL CONTINUE TO RESPOND TO REQUESTS FOR APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE".
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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MASERU 1126

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E. QUESTION: SHOULD THE U.S. CONSIDER PROVIDING UP TO \$7 MILLION FOR EQUIPMENT, POSSIBLY INCLUDING SOME LETHAL ITEMS?

ANSWER: FOR REASONS OUTLINED ABOVE, WE STRONGLY FAVOR PROVISION OF SUBSTANTIAL FMS CREDITS IN RESPONSE TO BOTSWANA'S URGENT REQUESTS FOR BOTH LETHAL AND NON-LETHAL EQUIPMENT. DETAILS ARE OUTLINED
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IN THREE-PART TELEGRAM -- GABORONE 1290, 1296, 1304.

F. QUESTION: CAN GOB COME UP WITH CASH FOR COMMERCIAL PURCHASES IN U.S.; AND IF SO, HOW MUCH?

ANSWER: GOB CAN MAKE CASH PURCHASES BUT (AS FARAH MISSION CONCLUDED) ONLY AT EXPENSE OF DEVELOPMENT BUDGET. TO THE EXTENT THAT GOB WOULD BE REQUIRED TO LAY OUT CASH FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE, BOTSWANA WOULD BE CORRESPONDINGLY ATTRACTED TO COMMUNIST GRANT ASSISTANCE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT HOW MUCH GOB WOULD BE PREPARED TO PAY IN CASH BUT WE DOUBT IT WOULD EXCEED \$3 MILLION. MUCH WOULD DEPEND UPON ANTICIPATED RECURRENT BUDGET COSTS WHICH PRESENT GROUP OF CONSERVATIVE FINANCIAL ADVISORS WOULD SEEK TO MINIMIZE.

G. QUESTION: WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT OF TELLING GOB THAT CASH
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PURCHASES ARE MORE EXPEDITIOUS, AND THAT WE ARE PLANNING AN INCREASE IN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE?

ANSWER: FROM WHAT WE HAVE BEEN TOLD, THIS IS IN EFFECT WHAT THE UK DID SEVERAL YEARS AGO WHEN "SELLING" 400 RIFLES AND 70,000 ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION WHICH WERE ACTUALLY PAID FOR BY THE UK THROUGH BUDGETARY SLIGHT OF HAND. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE WAS NOTHING EXPEDITIOUS ABOUT THAT METHOD -- ALTHOUGH THE PROBLEM WAS IN DELIVERY TIME, NOT PROCUREMENT. THE KEY POINT IS THAT GOB APPARENTLY HAD NO DIFFICULTY IN FINDING A WAY TO ARRANGE FOR SUCH PROCUREMENT THROUGH THE UK. PRESUMABLY THE GOB COULD FIND WAYS OF DOING SO AGAIN. HOWEVER, GOB WOULD HAVE REASON TO BE SKEPTICAL ABOUT U.S. ROLE GIVEN OUR FREQUENTLY-AFFIRMED STATEMENTS THAT U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IS TIED TO SPECIFIC PROJECTS. (WE WOULD BE INTERESTED TO KNOW WHETHER USG COULD PRESENT ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AS DIRECT BUDGET SUPPORT). WE WOULD WISH TO EXPLORE FURTHER THE TERMS OF ANY ARRANGEMENT WE COULD OFFER BEFORE TRYING TO JUDGE THE RELATIVE MERITS AND EFFECTS OF CASH PAYMENT AS AGAINST CREDITS.

H. QUESTION: IN THE WAKE OF FAILURE BY MOST DONORS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO BOTSWANA FOLLOWING THE FARAH REPORT, IS BOTSWANA REASSESSING LIKELIHOOD OF WESTERN MILITARY AID?

ANSWER: THE RELATIVELY WEAK RESPONSE TO THE FARAH APPEAL HAS NO DOUBT CAUSED GOB TO QUESTION WHETHER IT CAN COUNT ON ITS INCREASED MILITARY EXPENDITURES BEING MATCHED BY INCREASED DONOR FUNDING. THIS NATURALLY MILITATES AGAINST GOB WILLINGNESS TO UNDERTAKE CASH PURCHASES FROM WESTERN SOURCES AND IN FAVOR OF GRANT PROCUREMENT FROM COMMUNIST COUNTRIES.

3. REGRET THE CIRCUIT OUTAGES AND DISTRIBUTION MIX-UP RESULTING IN
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DELAY OF ABOVE REPLIES.
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Message Attributes

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Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition Reason:
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Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: 77 STATE 157928, 77 STATE 178413
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1420501
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BOTSWANA MILITARY ASSISTANCE
TAGS: MASS, BC, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/86e39e4f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009